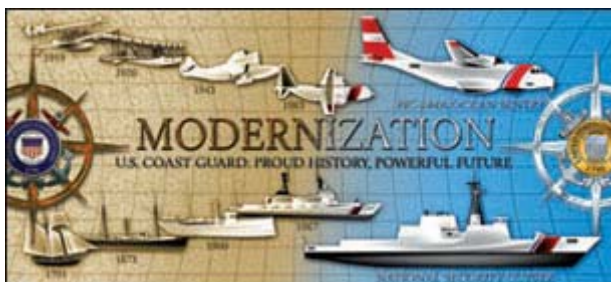


Document Number: 2508

Fifth District
U.S. Coast Guard



**U.S. Department of
 Homeland Security
 United States
 Coast Guard**



Feature Release

Date: Aug. 18, 2008
 Contact: Petty Officer Kip Wadlow
 (757) 389-6626

Coast Guardsman rescues injured osprey



PORTSMOUTH, Va. - On a typical day in port, Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Shawn Smith, a native of Valrico, Fla., stationed aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Forward, spends his days training and preparing the ship for its next patrol, but Tuesday, Aug. 5, wasn't a typical day.

While Smith was returning to the ship from firearms training at Integrated Support Command Portsmouth's firing range, he noticed something amiss, an osprey with an injured wing in need of help.

PORTSMOUTH, Va. - Coast Guard Cutter Forward crewmembers Seaman Christian Thomas, Seaman Jose Torres, Petty Officer 3rd Class Shawn Smith, Seaman Benjamin Cunningham and Seaman Stephen Starnes are photographed following the rescue of an injured osprey from the water in Portsmouth, Va., Tuesday, Aug. 5, 2008.

Smith rescued the osprey and helped locate a local animal rehabilitation center to rehabilitate the injured bird until it can be released into the wild.

(U.S. Coast Guard photo/Ensign Mary Gilday)

Smith said. Once under the pier she climbed on to a board and remained there helpless."

"I saw the osprey struggling in the water and watched her make her way underneath the pier,"

After climbing down the pier to investigate, Smith quickly realized the bird of prey was in

serious danger.

"She got aggressive and agitated and opened her wings to make herself look larger. That's when I noticed the blood on her wing," said Smith.

Not wanting to stress the animal anymore than necessary, Smith quickly climbed back up the pier. After alerting his chain of command to the bird's plight, he quickly gathered the protective equipment he would need to safely rescue the injured avian.

Smith, an avid outdoorsman, knew the bird's sharp beak and talons used in the wild to catch and shred fish, could cause him significant injuries if he wasn't careful.

"I quickly determined I would need thick leather gloves, a blanket and a large box," said Smith. "I eased down to the fender at the water's edge with the blanket in hand and inched my way toward the osprey."

Smith's shipmate, Seaman Stephen Starnes, climbed down behind the predator and, once Smith was in position, distracted the osprey long enough to allow Smith to capture it with the blanket.

Once safely back on the pier Smith and Starnes carefully removed the bird from the blanket and placed it into a box.

After completing the rescue, Smith contacted a local rehabilitation center who agreed to care for the injured osprey until it had recovered enough to be safely released into the wild.

The command in charge of his ship was pleased with Smith's initiative in assisting the injured osprey.

"Rescuing the injured osprey is an example of protection of natural resources, a less well-known but equally important Coast Guard mission," said Cmdr. Diane Durham. "The public is familiar with the Coast Guard missions of Homeland Security and search and rescue; however, not everyone is aware of our other missions."

"In the heart of every Coast Guard man and woman is a rescuer; it is part our culture and part of our ethos," said Durham. "Petty Officer Smith demonstrated our instinct to rescue, whether it's an animal or a person in distress. Petty Officer Smith serves as an example as why we are maritime guardians."

Smith was pleased by the way things turned out.

"I'm an avid hunter and fisherman and think that it's important to give back to nature," said Smith. "This was one of the most rewarding things I've done in my Coast Guard career and as an outdoorsman."

Smith, a three-year Coast Guard veteran, is the son of Manuel and Lori Smith of Valrico, Fla.

###

***Saving Lives and Guarding the Coast Since 1790.
The United States Coast Guard -- Proud History. Powerful Future.***